

A
PRACTICAL TREATISE
ON
THE SPIRITUAL IMPORT
OF
BAPTISM,
AND
THE DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE OBSERVANCE
OF THE ORDINANCE.

By THE REV. JOHN THOMSON,
MINISTER OF SHETTLESTON.

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GLASGOW:—W. R. M'PHUN.

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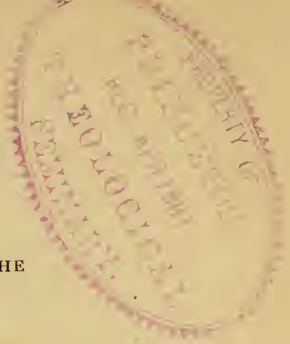
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TO THE

ELDERS AND CONGREGATION

OF

SHETTLESTON CHAPEL OF EASE,

THE FOLLOWING TREATISE IS,

WITH MUCH RESPECT,

Inscribed,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR,

THE AUTHOR.





PREFACE.

THE following treatise embraces the greater part of a series of discourses on the general subject of Baptism, recently addressed to the Congregation of Shettleston. It was the author's original intention to have these discourses printed for circulation, merely among the heads of families, in the district more immediately connected with the Chapel. He has been led, however, to indulge the hope, that at least the practical department of the series, may not be altogether unedifying or unacceptable to others. He now ventures, therefore, to bring the substance of what was thus delivered to his people,

before the public, in the present form. Sensible of much deficiency, he does so with no little hesitation. But he looks for the blessing of the Holy Spirit of God, in whose hand even the weakest may become the honoured instrument of advancing the cause of Christ. And it will give him unspeakable satisfaction, if, even in a single instance, he can here be the means of making a salutary or saving impression.

SHETTLESTON, *October*, 1832.

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INTRODUCTION.

WISELY accommodating himself to the circumstances of his people under the Old Testament dispensation, Jehovah had been pleased to establish among them various ceremonial observances, not merely as constituent parts of his worship, but as emblematical, at the same time, of his own gracious designs, and most emphatically expressive also on their part, of humble and thankful acquiescence in the plan as well as the offer of divine mercy. Besides these, however, there were others instituted by the Jews themselves, which they very generally, if not universally practised, as of paramount importance and indispensable obligation.

Among the rest, there was added to the initiatory rite of the Jewish Church, a ceremony termed "the baptism of proselytism," upon which the efficacy of this peculiar rite was supposed essentially, or at least very materially to depend. In the case, more especially, of Gentile converts, the ordinance of circumcision was not of itself deemed sufficient to answer the purpose for which it had been prescribed. Before any such candidate for admission into the Commonwealth of Israel could be fully entitled to share the blessings of the covenant, it was considered necessary, that besides being duly circumcised, according to the directions of the Mosaic law, he should be led to some running stream or natural fountain, and there, after receiving farther instruction, should, in the presence of persons appointed for the purpose, have his whole body immersed in the water. Such was the importance attached to this ceremony, that while without it all else

was accounted defective or useless, it was alleged to involve in it, or to carry along with it a complete personal and relative change. Every individual thus baptized was supposed thereby to be freed from his corrupted heathen soul, and to obtain in its place another and a pure one, previously existing and prepared for the purpose. Hence these proselytes of righteousness, as they were termed, were every where regarded as children once born in sin, but now born in the covenant, and were accordingly designated by the expressions *new born, spiritually born, regenerated, new creatures*. As the consequence, too, of all this, every tie, whether of nature or of affinity, was held to be completely broken. Their heathen relatives were no longer looked upon as in any way belonging to them, or in any degree connected with them—a fact which in all probability gave occasion to the statement of a celebrated Roman historian, that, “The first princi-

ples of the religion into which the Jewish convert was initiated, taught him to renounce his country, and to hold in contempt his parents, and children, and brothers." *

To the ceremony thus prevalent among the Jews, the initiatory rite, under the New Testament dispensation, is very commonly traced. Nor is the supposition by any means improbable, that its being so well known and so generally practised among those to whom the Gospel was first proclaimed, did actually suggest the idea of baptism to our Lord, and induce him to establish it as an ordinance of the Christian Church. In opposition to this, indeed, the fact itself thus referred to as the origin of the rite is not unfrequently disputed. It is maintained by many, that as neither the Targumists, nor Josephus, nor Philo, whose writings appeared about the close of the first century, have

* Tacitus, Book v. chap. 5.

taken the least notice of it, we have no sufficient evidence that any such practice actually prevailed among the Jews previous to the public ministry of the Messiah's forerunner himself. The objection, however, seems to be completely overthrown by the manner in which, according to the sacred narrative, John's administration of this ordinance was generally contemplated and spoken of. Had it been till then unknown, the novelty of the institution could hardly have failed to excite the feeling, and call forth the expression of surprise; whereas, on the contrary, the language in which the practice of John is alluded to, discovers nothing but the most common and familiar acquaintance with it. The priests and the Levites sent from Jerusalem "asked him and said unto him, Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" * Besides,

* John i 25.

on the supposition that it had never been introduced till the time of our Lord and his forerunner, there appears to be no little difficulty in accounting for its subsequent prevalence among the Jews. To say that it was borrowed from the religion of Jesus, (which alone can remove the difficulty,) is to forget entirely the inveteracy of the prejudices which every thing belonging to, or in any way connected with this holy religion had to encounter among the descendants of Israel.

Nor is there any greater force in the objection, also not unfrequently urged, that having been neither required nor sanctioned by the divine authority, it was therefore unworthy of the Saviour's respect, far less deserving his imitation. To meet the conclusion thus very hastily drawn, nothing more is requisite than the simple reference to what took place at the institution, of the other sacrament. It had become usual, in concluding the celebration of

the Passover, for the master of the household, or the person presiding, to distribute among the guests a cake of unleavened bread, broken and blessed, and afterwards a cup of wine also, over which, in like manner, the divine blessing had been implored. For this part of the ceremony there was no warrant whatever in the directions or injunctions of the Mosiac law. Yet our blessed Lord, when instituting the correspondent Christian ordinance, hesitated not, in the exercise of his prerogative, as the divine Head of the Church to retain what was thus of mere human authority, while he set aside, at the same time, all that had been so expressly appointed under the immediate superintendence of God. So, also, when instituting the initiatory ordinance of the Christian Church, did he choose rather to abrogate the rite of circumcision, as ordained by Moses, and to retain the additional ceremony observed by the Jews. Intending it, however, to be peculiarly distinctive of his followers, or, in

other words, an external mark of separation from every other religious community, a very material addition was made by him to the form of administering it. In the commission given to the apostles immediately before his ascension into heaven, we find him expressly requiring, not only that they should, in imitation of the corresponding practice among the Jews, impart to their converts, before baptizing them, the full knowledge of Christian doctrine, but also that they should use, in the act of baptizing them, a particular expression, not less obviously than directly implying the whole system of evangelical truth. "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *

Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

PART I.

THE SPIRITUAL IMPORT OF BAPTISM.

In our truly invaluable Confession of Faith, this ordinance is thus defined: "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ not only for the solemn admission of the Party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a Sign and Seal of the Covenant of Grace, of his Ingrafting into Christ, of Regeneration, of Remission of Sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in Newness of Life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church till the end of the world." * Of

* Confess. Faith, xxviii. 1.

the various particulars thus enumerated, there are four to which we here solicit attention, as comprehending all that the ordinance either expressly teaches or indirectly represents. These are Ingrafting into, or Union with Christ, Pardon or freedom from the *guilt* of sin, Regeneration or deliverance from the *pollution* of sin, and Dedication to the service of God in Christ. Of these, baptism, or the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is declared to be a SIGN and SEAL.

SECTION I.

BAPTISM A SIGN OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

1. *Baptism signifies our Ingrafting into, or Union with Christ.*

This is satisfactorily demonstrated by the language of the Apostle Paul, Rom. vi. 3, “ Know ye not that so many of us as were

baptized *into Jesus Christ*, were baptized into his death?"—and also Gal. iii. 27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have *put on Christ*." These expressions very unequivocally point to some peculiar connexion as subsisting between Christ and his people. In what this connexion actually consists, is elsewhere distinctly set before us. From many different passages of Scripture, where it is particularly spoken of, we learn that while it is in the strictest acceptation of the terms *indispensible* and *indissoluble*, it resembles, at the same time, the intimate relation of the head to the different members of the body—Christ as the head conveying, and believers as the members receiving the various supplies necessary for spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Accordingly we are not only represented as being *all one in Christ Jesus*,* but the Church is frequently

* Gal. iii. 28.

denominated *the body of Christ*,* while it is declared also in express terms, that “by one Spirit are we all *baptized into one body*.”† Of the union with Christ, then, thus characterized, the ordinance of baptism is very fully and strikingly significant; in as much as in the simple but truly apt and expressive emblem of water, we find at once implied and exhibited both its *meritoriously procuring cause*—even the blood or sacrifice of the cross,—and also its *effectually accomplishing agency*—even the influences of the Holy Spirit, purchased for believers by that same precious blood.

Hence, as is obvious, the ordinance must be understood as proclaiming indirectly, but still very fully and impressively, the grand doctrine of our NATURAL IMPOTENCY or spiritual death. Christ being thus set before us as supporting the life of the soul, we are most distinctly

* 1st Cor. xii. 27; Ephes. iv. 12. † 1st Cor. xii. 13.

taught, that unconnected with him, we are not less incapacitated for every thing that belongs to our moral and responsible nature, than the body is unable to exercise its peculiar functions apart from its animating principle.

2. Baptism signifies Pardon or Freedom from the GUILT of Sin.

Representing our Ingrafting into, or Union with Christ, baptism, is by obvious consequence, significant, at the same time, of all the various blessings that belong to or result from this peculiarly intimate connexion. In particular, it points to our *deliverance from guilt*. Of this we have a very clear intimation, both in the Apostle Peter's exhortation to his countrymen, Acts ii. 38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins,*" and also in the language of Ananias, addressed to Saul, Acts xxii. 16, "Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy*

sins.” Nor is the emblematical relation between baptism and freedom from guilt less forcibly suggested in looking to the appointed symbol itself. Representing the Saviour’s blood, the water used in baptism refers as a matter of course to the purpose for which that blood was shed—even the justification of believers, or, in other words, the remission of their sins. The water, therefore, as poured or sprinkled upon the body, and thus removing external defilement, not less evidently than emphatically denotes the blood of Christ applied to the soul, and thus cleansing the conscience from guilt. Accordingly, we find the expiatory sufferings of the Redeemer repeatedly spoken of under the figure of water, or in distinct allusion to its purifying efficacy. Thus, for example, Zech. xiii. 1, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness:” and, again, Rev. i. 5, 6, the re-

deemed in heaven are represented as “ascribing glory and dominion forever to Him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood.”

Regarded in this point of view, the ordinance before us is very plainly indicative of the *condemnation* under which every child of Adam is naturally placed, while, at the same time, it no less fully than clearly implies, on the part of all who receive it, the believing acknowledgment of that condemnation as really and justly belonging to them, and of the consequent absolute necessity *for themselves individually*, of the Saviour’s justifying righteousness, wrought out in his perfect obedience and atoning death, as the only means of deliverance from its pressure and its fruits.

3. *Baptism signifies Regeneration, or freedom from the POLLUTION of Sin.*

To this also we have the direct testimony of

Scripture. Not to mention that throughout the whole sacred record, the Spirit of God, as the author of regeneration, is symbolized by the element of water, we find the Prophet Isaiah (xliv. 3,) putting forth this remarkable promise in the name of the Lord,—“ I will pour *water* upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground : I will pour *my Spirit* upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” The Apostle Paul likewise (Ephes. v. 25, 26.) enforces a preceding exhortation by the statement that “ Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it ; that he might *sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water* by the word.” More unequivocal still is the language addressed by the same Apostle to Titus, (iii. 5,) “ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he (God) saved us by *the washing of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” From these passages, with many others of similar import,

it appears that in the ordinance before us there is a direct allusion to that great work of the Spirit, in which he removes the corruption of our fallen nature, restoring every power of the soul to its original tendency and legitimate exercise, enlightening the understanding, quickening the conscience, subduing the will, elevating the affections, in short, re-impressing the divine image.

Of all this the element made use of in the administration of baptism is not less strikingly than aptly emblematical. As water removes effectually all external pollution, so does the Spirit of God effectually remove the internal pollution of sin. As water quenches the thirst of the body, so does the Spirit of God refresh the soul that is "thirsting after righteousness." As water relieves the oppression of parching heat, so does the Spirit of God support and comfort amid the fiery trial of indwelling sin. As water likewise fructifies the earth, so does the Spirit of God call forth in the hearts and

lives of his people the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

While thus expressively symbolizing what is termed by the Apostle *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, the ordinance of baptism points most distinctly, at the same time, to our natural state of *spiritual degeneracy* and *moral pollution*. Beholding here the Spirit's regenerating agency, we are brought of necessity to contemplate the evils of this woefully degraded condition whence it is put forth to deliver us. Of course, therefore, in as far as our reception of its outward symbol can have any spiritual meaning at all, there are clearly and fully implied, in the very act of doing so, the sense of these evils with the profession of earnest desire to escape from their prevalence, their danger, and their fruits.

4. *Baptism signifies our Dedication to the service of God in Christ.*

Not to mention that it is plainly inferible

from the very nature of the blessings here symbolically represented, this is most abundantly obvious from the words of the institution itself. If these be at all intelligible, they point unquestionably to the full practical acquiescence in every thing that belongs to the nature, or to the work, or to the authority of each of the different persons of the Godhead as particularly specified. Of course, then, there is here a distinct acknowledgment of the FATHER in our relation to him as his redeemed children, bound by every tie of gratitude, as well as of duty, to love, to honour, and to obey him—of the SON in our connexion with him as Mediator of the New Covenant, set forth to be the propitiation for our sins, and at the same time executing the offices of our Prophet to guide us, and of our King to protect and to govern us—and of the HOLY GHOST in our dependance upon him as bearing the office of the Comforter, and sent down in this capacity, to apply the benefits

of Christ's purchased redemption. In other words, being baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is synonymous with being given up to the faith, made partakers of the worship, and coming under the service of the blessed Trinity, as revealed to us in the Gospel.

SECTION II.

BAPTISM A SEAL OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

1. *The ordinance of Baptism, while it signifies or symbolically represents the blessings of the New Covenant, is also, at the same time, a SEAL of these blessings.*

This term is applied by the Apostle Paul, to the initiatory rite, under the old dispensation. He tells us, (Rom. iv. 11,) that Abraham, "received the sign of circumcision, a SEAL of the righteousness of faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." The propriety of its

being also applied to the initiatory rite under the new dispensation, is abundantly evident from the fact that the latter now occupies the place of the former. This fact is not unfrequently disputed. It may be proper, therefore, here to bring forward the substance at least of the argument respecting it.

The substitution of baptism under the new dispensation for circumcision under the old, appears directly inferible from the identity of the Abrahamic Covenant, to which the latter was appended as the seal, with the Covenant of Grace, to which the former is now attached in the like capacity. This identity can scarcely be disputed by any who give their serious unprejudiced attention to the reasoning of the Apostle Paul, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Galatians. His object there is to defend and enforce the doctrine of justification by faith. For this purpose, he refers particularly to the case of Abraham, whose belief was "accounted to him

for righteousness;" and proceeds to show, that all in every age who are characterized by the like evangelical belief, stand on precisely the same ground, and participate in exactly the same spiritual blessings: in other words, are included under, and have an interest in, the promises of that very covenant, according to the terms of which the Patriarch himself was thus accepted of God. It is most satisfactorily argued that this covenant could not be superseded by the subsequent giving of the law, seeing that were the attainment of its blessings to rest in any degree on the condition of personal obedience, the promise given to Abraham would be altogether ineffective as securing these blessings to his spiritual seed. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was

four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”* As the conclusion here directly and obviously pointed to, the Apostle, after stating that the law, though making no alteration as to the way of acceptance with God, was notwithstanding of peculiar importance as “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” goes on to declare, at the close of the chapter, that all who are “the children of God by faith” are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” And surely if from all this there be any thing more apparent than another, it is just that the Abrahamic Covenant is still as much in force as ever, and that it is as placed under this very covenant that believers are now and ever have been “blessed with

* Gal. iii. 16—18.

faithful Abraham,"—a conclusion indeed from which we apprehend it would be somewhat difficult to escape, even though there were little else to guide us than the simple statement that it "*was confirmed before of God in Christ.*"

The Abrahamic Covenant being thus identified with the Covenant of Grace, it is very obvious that as circumcision and baptism are both consequently *seals of the same covenant*, the latter now retained just occupies the place of the former, which it has long since superseded. Such, accordingly, seems to be the bearing of the Apostle's reasoning in Col. ii. 11, 12; "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." The expression, "buried with him in baptism," is unquestionably here

intended to illustrate or explain the circumcision of Christ as now superseding the circumcision made with hands. But surely it requires little penetration to discover that, as thus employed, it is altogether pointless, if it be not indeed totally unintelligible, unless the ordinance of baptism has really been substituted for circumcision.*

* The substitution of baptism under the new dispensation for circumcision under the old, furnishes a very powerful argument in favour of administering the former to the INFANTS of professing parents. It is on this, indeed, that we conceive the strength of the reasoning in support of the practice chiefly to depend. We take the opportunity, therefore, (as our limits prevent us from entering at large upon the controversy respecting infant baptism) to state here, in a few sentences, the substance of the argument referred to.

If baptism, as we have endeavoured to show, now occupies the place of circumcision, it necessarily follows, that since in virtue of their connexion with their parents infants were entitled to the application of the latter, then most certainly upon the very same principle are we warranted similarly to apply the former. Any objection to their being the proper subjects of the one militates with equal force against their qualification for the other. The conclusion, indeed, here presented, might have been sufficiently met by *a special divine communication*, intimating unequivocally the exclusion of children under the new dispensation, from the privileges enjoyed by them under the old. Nothing of the kind, however, is any where to be

Baptism, then, thus occupying under the new dispensation the place of circumcision under the old, cannot be regarded in any de-

found. In the absence, therefore, of all such legitimate proof, that any change in this respect, was ever intended on the part of God, we are most fully justifiable in continuing, nay, we are *in no degree warranted to discontinue* the practice of putting the seal or token of the covenant upon the infant offspring of Christian disciples.

It will not do to say that the direction of our Lord, first to teach all nations, and then to baptize them, involves the exclusion of infants, as incapable of being taught. For it is quite indisputable, (as has been often observed,) that had the Apostles received a commission in similar terms, to continue the practice of circumcision, they must certainly have understood that commission, as authorizing them also to continue the existing practice, in regard to the *subjects* of the ordinance. Is it to be supposed for a moment, that had it been said to them, Go ye and teach all nations, *circumcising* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, they would ever, in any instance, have hesitated to administer the rite, just as formerly, to the children of professing parents, as well as to the parents themselves? Upon what rational ground, then, can it be maintained that the same language should in the one case be regarded as excluding the children of Christian disciples, which yet in the other case, cannot be understood as prescribing any such particular limitation.

It has been alleged that circumcision had no relation to the covenant made with Abraham, except in so far as that covenant pointed to the possession by his *natural* seed of the land of Canaan, with the enjoyment of the *temporal* blessings included

gree different, far less to any extent inferior to the latter as to its spiritual bearing. With equal propriety therefore, is the term SEAL of the covenant to be applied to both.

under the promise respecting it, and that consequently no argument can be legitimately founded upon it, in reference to the administration of baptism as the seal of *spiritual* blessings. That this, however, is a very erroneous view of the ordinance, may be most easily and satisfactorily demonstrated. Not to mention that no such restriction as to its bearing is made by the language in which the institution of the ordinance is expressed, we find from the subsequent conduct of Abraham himself, that he, at least, was very far from thus understanding it. For we are distinctly told in the sacred narrative, that he administered the outward rite even to those branches of his family who had no interest whatever in the temporal peculiarities of the covenant which this rite signed and sealed,—a fact which can be accounted for only on the supposition, that, in his estimation, it bore not less directly upon the attainment of those *spiritual* blessings, the promise respecting which equally concerned all the members of his household. But in truth, the point at issue is completely set at rest by the language of inspiration itself. The rite of circumcision is repeatedly spoken of in the sacred record as having a spiritual signification. Thus Deut. xxx. 6, “The Lord thy God *will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed* to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” Again, Rom. ii. 28, 29. “He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter*; whose

The expression is evidently taken from the common practice of ratifying any grant, or public deed, by subjoining the seal of the parties concerned. As in this case, the seal is a visible pledge of mutual adherence to the specified agreement, binding the one party to give, and the other to receive the benefits which it assigns or implies, so in like manner baptism is *a seal or pledge* of mutual adherence by God and his people to the covenant of grace, the former thus solemnly binding himself to bestow upon all who are interested in the mediation of Christ the benefits of this covenant—even pardon and eternal life;—and the latter, thus also as solemnly binding themselves to

praise is not of men but of God.” And more unequivocal still is the language of the Apostle in this same epistle to the Romans, (iv. 11,) “ And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, *a seal of the righteousness of the faith* which he had, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.”

embrace the offer of these benefits, and to submit unreservedly to the merits of Christ as alone securing them, and to the government of Christ as alone administering them.

That the ordinance implies this assurance on the part of *God*, is evident from its character, as symbolizing the dispensation of Gospel blessings. The very exhibition of the manner in which God has secured, and now renders available these precious blessings, necessarily carries along with it, and unequivocally sets forth at the same time, the divine determination to convey the possession of them, unto all for whom they are designed. The promise of God, indeed, connecting the attainment of them, with the exercise of faith in Christ, of itself insures them to all true believers. But, in condescension to our weakness, this promise is here sensibly confirmed—its truth being thus more influentially carried home to us, and its ultimate fulfilment more effectively impressed upon us.

That there is also implied in this ordinance, the corresponding engagement on the part of *man*, is directly inferible from the language of the Apostle Paul, (Rom. vi. 3—6,) “ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” If in this passage any thing be more plainly taught than another, it is just that by the reception of baptism we openly and visibly engage to cherish the principles which strictly accord with, and to cultivate the habits that are in full subserviency to the all-

important ends of the Saviour's death—in other words, to rest on the blood of the cross as the ground of justification, and to consider ourselves as by the outpouring of that precious blood purchased unto Christ, and consequently no longer our own, but wholly and for ever the Lord's.

2. *The ordinance of Baptism, though it be the visible pledge for the fulfilment, by God on the one hand, and believers on the other, of what is mutually stipulated in the Gospel Covenant,* MUST NOT BE REGARDED AS EITHER ESSENTIALLY INVOLVING, OR NECESSARILY FOLLOWED BY, THE ACTUAL COMMUNICATION *of regenerating grace.*

That the proper administration of the ordinance of itself, imparts the renovating influence of the Holy Spirit, has long been maintained by the Church of Rome. Not a few also among the several denominations of Protestants consider

the new birth, as its inseparable concomitant. Hence it is that the absolute necessity of baptism as an instrument of salvation, is by that church and by all who thus far adhere to her doctrine, so particularly held and so positively inculcated. Hence, too, may we very evidently trace the peculiar repugnance, not unfrequently evinced, even among others, to the idea of children dying unbaptized or remaining so beyond the usual period. All this however is decidedly at variance both with Scripture and with fact.

It is at variance with FACT. For in looking to the external deportment of professing disciples, as the divinely authorized test of their spiritual state, we find by far the greater proportion of those who have been duly or scripturally baptized just as unrenewed and as unsanctified as ever. Not a few who had been privileged to receive the ordinance from the Apostles themselves are expressly declared in the sacred record to be yet, notwithstanding, among the

number of the reprobate. In every succeeding age of the church, similar examples have been not less generally than conspicuously displayed. Nor is there any class of the Christian community however pure in doctrine, in worship, or in discipline, among whom such examples have not been frequently, nay continually realized.

It will not do to tell us that in these cases there has been a falling away from the grace conveyed by the administration of baptism. Without insisting upon the impossibility of thus falling from grace, which, though generally denied by the advocates for baptismal regeneration, is unequivocally asserted both by our Lord himself* and also by his inspired Apostles,†—without insisting upon the impossibility of thus falling from grace, we have to observe, that there are multitudes in whose progress, *even from the very instant of baptism* up till the latest period of

* John v. 24.

† Philipp. i. 6 ; 1st John iii. 9.

earthly probation, there is no appearance whatever of the renovated heart.

The opinion before us is not less at variance with SCRIPTURE. Several passages, indeed, may be referred to, as in the estimation of many sufficiently authorizing it. It is frequently argued from the language of our Saviour to Nicodemus,—“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,”*—a passage, however, too vague in its bearing upon the point at issue to be at all decisive in its favour. Even supposing that the ordinance of baptism is here alluded to, which, to say the least, admits of some dispute, still it is to be observed that on this supposition, to be born of water and to be born of the Spirit are spoken of as perfectly distinct from each other. If such be not the case,—if the two expressions be identical, then the former being, as is obvi-

* John iii. 5.

ous, illustrative merely of the Spirit's operation, cannot with consistency be understood as having any the smallest reference to the ordinance of baptism. To be born of water, then, and to be born of the Spirit being thus, on the supposition of those with whom we are contending, spoken of as perfectly distinct from each other, our Lord, when here employing such figurative language, may consequently, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, be regarded simply as intimating that none can be admitted into the *visible* church except by passing through the initiatory rite, nor can any become members of his invisible kingdom, or, in other words, be admitted into the *true* church, apart from the agency of his Holy Spirit.

Equally inconclusive are the passages very frequently referred to, where God is spoken of as saving us by the washing of regeneration,*

* Titus iii. 5.

and where Christ is said to sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of water by the word.* These, if pointing to baptism at all, are nothing more than figurative expressions drawn from the connexion between regeneration and that ordinance, *considered merely as its appointed symbol*. Nor is there any thing more decisive in the declaration of our Lord, (Mark xvi. 16,) “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” So far indeed from supporting the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, this passage can have little force and as little consistency, if not understood as in direct opposition to it. For inasmuch as it makes the exercise of evangelical belief essential to the salvation even of the baptized, while in speaking of final condemnation, it refers not at all to the want of baptism, as having any thing to do with such condemna-

* Ephesians v. 26.

tion, it is clear beyond dispute, that the redemption of Christ's people is here spoken of, not as flowing from this initiatory rite, but as obtained through the instrumentality of genuine faith.

But in truth the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is *expressly denied* in the sacred record. We find the Apostle Peter in his first general epistle thus pointedly expressing himself. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (*not the putting away of the filth of the flesh* but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* Surely if this language of the Apostle has any meaning at all, it plainly and indisputably teaches us to look for salvation, not to the outward ceremony of baptism, but to the inward grace, of which it is emblematical, and which, as its previous existence is essential to

* 1st Peter iii. 21.

the Scriptural observance of that ceremony, cannot in the very nature of things be its effect or its consequent. This inspired declaration, too, is in manifest accordance with Apostolic example. Repentance and faith were, in every case of adult baptism which the sacred narrative brings before us, required as indispensable qualifications for the reception of this Christian privilege. These, therefore, must of course have been looked to by the inspired Apostles as preceding, not as accompanying or flowing from the administration of the outward rite.

PART II.

THE DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE OBSERVANCE OF BAPTISM.

Adverting to the circumstances of professedly Christian parents, it is truly painful to observe the false principles under the ascendancy of which they very generally apply for the privilege, the unsuitable state of mind and of heart in which they no less generally receive it, and the total neglect of the obligations under which it manifestly brings them, that is even more generally exemplified in their subsequent deportment. Compliance with prevailing custom appears to be the only, or at any rate the leading motive with many when seeking to have

their offspring baptized. Not a few seem to value the ordinance, merely as exempting either themselves or their children, from the reproach to which, without it, they can scarcely fail in a Christian land to be exposed. To many it is desirable, as in some inexplicable way promoting the child's salvation. By others its peculiar nature is little thought of, and its spiritual import as little attended to. Others again, neither care for its objects nor seek to understand its use: while in most cases there is no real influential concern as to their previous qualification for the observance of it.

The very act, too, of observing the ordinance is not seldom a mere idle ceremony. It is a service with which the heart but too often has little to do: in which, at any rate, with regard to the vast majority, no Christian grace finds its exercise. In short, the mere naming of the infant, or the simple gesture of assent to what is said by the servant of the Lord, when preparing to ad-

minister it, seems to be all that, in the estimation of multitudes, is really required of them.

Equally deplorable, and, if possible, still more inconsistent and unworthy, is the conduct by which the reception of baptism is not unfrequently followed. No sooner is the outward ceremony concluded, than the ordinance is immediately lost sight of, both as to its essential importance, and as to its practical bearing. It produces no lasting impression, whether upon the thoughts, or upon the affections, or upon the general course of life and conversation. The incongruous and unseemly, nay, sometimes unholy festivity of which in general it is made the occasion, appears at once to obliterate the peculiar profession, and to cancel the solemn engagement by which it has been preceded. The maintenance of the former is rarely afterwards a matter of heart-felt concern. The performance of the latter, whether as affecting the child, or as relating to the parent himself, is, in

no small proportion of instances, entirely forgotten, or at least very far from being faithfully and perseveringly looked to.

Of all this, not a little is certainly to be ascribed to unfaithfulness on the part of those who are called to administer the ordinance. With greater strictness of discipline, and more care in previously ascertaining the spiritual state, as well as the Christian knowledge and moral character of applicants for the privilege, the abuse referred to, so sinful in itself and so pernicious in its effects, would be, if not entirely done away, at least very generally counteracted, or very materially lessened. But surely in by far the majority of instances, the evils complained of find their origin, their nourishment, and their growth, not less than their examples in the recipients themselves. At all events, however much the prevalence of such evils may be occasioned or fostered by the remissness of their spiritual rulers, that unquestionably can

never for one moment, in any sense, or to any extent, diminish their own individual responsibility. Their unreserved, and uncompromising attention to all that belongs to them, in reference to the privilege of baptism, sought or obtained for their children, is not the less peremptorily demanded. It is consequently of the very last importance that they should not only be fully aware of, but *keep habitually and INFLUENTIALLY in view* all that is thus incumbent on them, and required of them. In subserviency, then, to this all-important object, we would now press upon the notice of professing parents, the three following particulars:—The necessary preparation for the ordinance: The state of mind and of heart in which it ought to be observed: The conduct, both personal and relative, by which it should be followed.

SECTION I.

THE NECESSARY PREPARATION FOR THE
ORDINANCE.

1. *A competent knowledge of every thing implied in Baptism, or connected with it.*

The indispensibleness of such knowledge, as preparatory to the reception of baptism, is most abundantly obvious. By many, indeed, who apply for the privilege, the possession of this knowledge seems to be regarded as of no great importance. Amid the grossest ignorance respecting its every particular, they present themselves as candidates for the reception of it; and esteeming themselves, notwithstanding, sufficiently qualified for engaging in the solemnity, are not a little offended, when the faithful servant of the Lord delays compliance with their request, until he may find them better instructed. At any rate, little more is cared for, than barely to pass through the

previous examination, necessarily short, and often, in consequence, very slight and superficial, to which, in the first instance at least, they are generally subjected. Nay, it is not seldom their endeavour to escape altogether from such previous examination, and they are quite satisfied, (to say no worse,) when either by management on their own part, or by carelessness on the part of their minister, they obtain permission to engage in this service, while yet they have little knowledge, if any at all, of its distinguishing peculiarities, and certainly no adequate conception of its value or its use.

Here, however, there is much folly, and no little criminality. As to the folly of such conduct, what can be more inconsistent with every principle of right reason, than thus thoughtlessly to enter upon a religious service, the meaning and bearing of which we neither understand nor appreciate? As to its criminality also, it is no better, or rather, it is nothing

else than the most daring profanation of an ordinance not less sacred in itself than peculiarly important in its practical tendency. To pass through its outward solemnity with no intelligent regard to its real import, and no right apprehension of its holy ends, is but to insult the great Searcher of hearts, by whom the *spiritual* observance of it is expressly required. Besides, in connexion with the ordinance, nay, as *essentially involved in the reception of it*, a profession of faith in Christ is put forth, and a promise of adherence to relative duty, is virtually, if not expressly given. If, then, the objects of such faith be unknown, or the nature and extent of such duty be not distinctly recognised, thus to profess the one or to promise the other is just *deliberately* TELLING A LIE to God's face. In such circumstances, therefore, to observe the outward ceremony of baptism, is virtually to express contempt for the character—impiously to set at nought the authority—recklessly to hold

in defiance the power of Him from whose wisdom the ordinance has sprung, and the purposes of whose grace it is designed to subserve. Just in proportion, then, to the enormity of the guilt here involved, and the magnitude of the danger here manifestly inferible as the consequence, must it be necessary that every parent, before coming forward to receive the privilege of baptism for his child, should make himself, in some competent measure, acquainted with the various particulars implied in it, or connected with it.

2. *Self-examination.*

As preparatory to this awfully responsible service, *Self-examination* is obviously of no less indispensable necessity. None but the real disciples of Jesus have any warrant whatever thus to put the seal of the covenant upon their offspring. The very design of the ordinance as a federal act, necessarily excludes from partici-

pation in it, all who bear not this peculiar character. The reception of it by the unbeliever, whether for himself or for his child, is not only without consistency and without meaning, but in truth an act of *daring and wilful impiety*. It is nothing else than insulting Jehovah to his face, in as much as, in such circumstances, the individual observing the ordinance, professes before God, by the divinely appointed sensible sign, his unreserved acquiescence in the Gospel scheme, while yet in his heart he neither values its blessings nor adheres to its requisitions. The unbeliever, then, when presuming to go forward to this peculiar solemnity, is just thrusting himself into that which cannot be spiritually observed by him at all, and which cannot be outwardly observed by him, without adding to the measure of his guilt, and thus laying himself open to fearfully aggravated condemnation.

All this, it is true, is seldom acknowledged, and still seldomer felt. Faith as a necessary

qualification for the reception of baptism, is in many cases never looked to for a moment. At any rate, the want of faith is never taken into account, as an obstacle of very serious or startling importance. While multitudes hang back from the other sacrament, (*in no degree more sacred or more* EXCLUSIVELY PROVIDED *for genuine disciples,*) under the fear of profaning it by coming without the prescribed qualifications, there are few, if indeed there be any, who are ever actuated by the like fear in regard to this. Yet the sin in the one case is substantially, nay, precisely the same as in the other. The unworthy communicant is chargeable with “accounting the blood of the covenant wherewith he (Christ) was sanctified, an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace.” But in what degree can the unbelieving recipient of baptism, be less chargeable with this awful crime, when even while using the water as emblematical of that same blood of the covenant, and that same Spirit

of grace, he is yet in his heart rejecting the one, and resisting the other? Unquestionably the act of going forward to the ordinance of baptism, while not yet distinguished by that genuine discipleship, which alone constitutes the warrant for doing so, just as fully deserves, and must as certainly call forth the visitation of God's wrath, as the similarly unwarranted approach to the ordinance of communion. It is surely, therefore, of the utmost consequence, that the professing parent, when about to receive the privilege of baptism for his child, should previously ascertain the sincerity of his profession, or, in other words, the reality of his *personal interest* in Christ, as obtained through the exercise, and manifested in the fruits of evangelical belief.

To the careful and candid examination, then, of heart and life, every parent applying for baptism is here very forcibly directed as a duty, in his peculiar circumstances, of paramount importance. He is called faithfully to scrutinize

the principles, on the one hand, that reign within him, and the external deportment, on the other hand, by which, under the influence of these principles, he is habitually characterized. And just as he shall be able, in making this scrutiny, to satisfy himself upon good scriptural ground that the former are in full accordance with the peculiarities of the Gospel scheme, and the latter in some competent degree conformed to the spirit of evangelical doctrine and the bearing of evangelical precept, so should be determined as to the appropriation of this great privilege to himself and his child.

More particularly in reference to the *principles* that reign within him, is he called to inquire whether he has been brought under the serious conviction of sin, impressed with its hatefulness as not less abominable in itself than distressful in its fruits, awakened to his danger as the object of its condemnatory sentence, filled with the humbling sense of his degrada-

tion as its victim, and his utter helplessness as its slave ; whether in consequence he is now feeling the necessity of implicit acquiescence in the great plan of redemption, of renouncing for ever all dependance upon any thing of his own, and of casting himself unreservedly upon the righteousness of Christ, as alone sufficient and all-sufficient to save him ; whether, in looking to the Saviour as thus in every respect suited to his need, he is cherishing unfeigned respect for his authority, heart-felt gratitude for his goodness, decided relish for his service ; whether he is desirous to adorn the doctrine and obey the precepts of Christ, not merely as essential to worldly respectability, or as a valuable preparative for heaven, but because holiness was the great end of the Saviour's mission, and because the pursuit of such holiness is at once the best evidence of personal interest in the blessings of the Saviour's purchase, and the most expressive method of evincing devoted

attachment to his person, and willing subserviency to his glory; and whether, finally, in seeking thus to glorify the God of his salvation, he is not only valuing the divine assistance generally as of vital importance, but anxious to come under the influences of the Holy Spirit, as especially provided for direction and sanctification; and uniformly affected at the same time by the fear of resisting or grieving this great divine Author of light and of life.

To each and all of these ought the attention of every professing parent, when seeking the privilege of baptism, to be directed as essential to his qualification for observing the ordinance. If he find himself really under the ascendancy of such principles, then may he go forward to this service, as fully warranted, or rather as invited, nay, commanded thus to dedicate his child unto God. The gracious promise, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed," is truly addressed to him. Confidently, therefore, may he rejoice in

the assurance that in the beloved, even Christ Jesus the Lord, shall he find acceptance for himself and his offspring.—If, however, it appear that no such principles are reigning within him, then let him beware of attempting to engage in this service. While in this spiritual state, his appropriation of the outward rite can be of no value to himself, and of no use whatever to his child. Nay, inasmuch as the very act of observing the ordinance is in these circumstances but an impious mockery of God, it must expose both the one and the other to the fulness of his threatened indignation.

In reference also to the *external deportment* by which under the influence of such principles he is habitually characterised, every professing parent, when desiring the privilege of baptism, is called particularly to inquire, whether that deportment is in any right sense accordant with the directions, or in any competent degree conformed to the requisitions of the Gospel:—

whether the divine glory is conspicuously recognised in all his individual progress, and in all his domestic arrangements:—whether the worship of God, not only in the sanctuary, but also in *secret*, and in the *family circle*, is faithfully attended to:—whether the service of Christ, is practically valued, and his ordinances duly observed:—whether the cultivation of moral rectitude, too, is the object of persevering endeavour; self-denial being assiduously practised, personal purity anxiously aimed at, outward decorum carefully maintained, in short, holiness in all manner of conversation appearing in prominent, as well as uniform ascendancy;—whether, also, the relative duties of life, are rightly looked to—whether the good of others, both temporal and spiritual, is really sought after; inward sincerity, and outward integrity, when dealing with them, being scrupulously adhered to, their rights conscientiously respected, their happiness diligently promoted, brotherly-

kindness, and charity being practically manifested towards them, in short, the strictest principles of justice, of truth, and of mercy, being in every situation acted up to.

These are the leading points of that external deportment which flows from, and is inseparably connected with genuine faith. Apart, therefore, from the habitual manifestation of them, there is no evidence of any personal interest in Christ, and consequently no warrant whatever to participate in the ordinance before us. Let not the professing parent, then, presume to engage in this service, until he find his daily walk and conversation thus particularly characterised.

Absolute, and uniform perfection, indeed, with respect to every thing here referred to, is by no means to be looked for. All, even the best and most devoted of the Saviour's people, would in this case be shut out from the privilege. But most assuredly, if the habits of external de-

portment just specified as founded upon real Christian principle, be not the distinguishing characteristics of his conduct *as a whole*, the professing parent, cannot put the seal of the covenant upon his offspring, without profaning the ordinance, and thus, by augmenting his guilt, exposing himself to proportionally aggravated condemnation. It is consequently his duty, not indeed to give up entirely the intention to appropriate this privilege to his child, but to *postpone* the actual fulfilment of any such intention, until his own character shall have undergone the change that marks the reality, and exemplifies the fruits of connexion with Christ. And, as this change, from first to last, is solely of the divine agency, we have to urge upon him the necessity of giving himself, in the mean time, to the diligent, careful, persevering use of all those instruments and opportunities of spiritual improvement, by and through which the Holy Spirit is revealed, as

operating upon the children of men. Nor is there wanting enough to support the expectation of his being in this way so brought under the love and the practice of holiness as to find himself, (with such evidence of faith,) warranted to dedicate his child in baptism unto God. Our blessed Redeemer, expressly assures us, that the Father *will give the Holy Spirit to them that ASK him*. We know, also, from the uniform experience of humbled and penitent sinners, that all who seek the Lord in the way of his own appointment, are made to rejoice in the sufficiency of divine grace, and enabled, more or less conspicuously, to go forward in the fullness of divine strength.

3. *Communion with the Church of Christ.*

In here directing the attention of professing parents to the internal principles and the external deportment necessary to qualify them for the privilege of baptism, we feel ourselves called

upon to take notice, particularly, of an opinion not less deplorably prevalent than it is pernicious in its effects. We allude to the idea, that a parent may warrantably go forward with his child to this sacrament, while he is yet habitually refusing the other sacrament for himself. Nothing can be more erroneous in principle, or more sinful in practice.

The neglect of communion, must proceed either, on the one hand, from unwillingness to confess the Saviour at the sacramental table, or, on the other hand, from the conviction of unworthiness to appear among its chosen guests. If it proceed from the former, then most unquestionably, in as much as it involves the spirit of contempt for the express, nay, the *dying* command of Christ, it demonstrates incontestably, that whatever may be the profession of the lips, the heart is still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Of course, therefore, this very neglect to observe the sacrament of the supper,

is, of itself, a sufficient disqualification for the sacrament of baptism. Thus proving the absence of all interest in Jesus, as the Saviour and the Lord of his people, it necessarily proves at the same time, that to go forward in such circumstances to the privilege of baptism is no better—is nothing else than a daring, a criminal, and, by consequence, an awfully dangerous intrusion.

If the refusal to communicate proceed from the conviction of unworthiness to appear at the sacramental table, then is there, in this very conviction, an equally decisive reason against the reception of baptism. The very same qualifications are prescribed for both of these ordinances. In respect to neither of them, is there any thing more required than just that spiritual state, with that corresponding external character, which essentially belong to, and more or less conspicuously distinguish every genuine disciple. To abstain from the one, therefore, is a

virtual, if not a direct acknowledgment of disqualification for the other. And seeing that they are of equal authority, and of equal sanctity, signs and seals of the same covenant of grace, pointing to the same grand objects of faith and of hope, and tending also to the same practical result, surely the conduct of the man, who, though he never comes himself to receive the sacrament of the supper, yet presents his children for the sacrament of baptism, is in no small degree foolish and inconsistent.

But it is not with folly and inconsistency alone that, in such circumstances, the professing parent is to be charged. In whatever point of view his situation can be regarded, the imputation of *deliberately contracted guilt* most certainly belongs to him. Supposing him, on the one hand, entitled as a real disciple of Jesus, to put the token of God's covenant upon his child, then surely his neglecting the ordinance of communion, to which, as thus dis-

tinguished, he is equally called, necessarily bears the character, and must therefore lead to the consequences of sin. Or, supposing him, on the other hand, unworthy to take his place at the table of the Lord, then, most unquestionably, by appearing with his child to observe the outward ceremony of baptism, from which the very same disqualification completely excludes him, he cannot but be involved in the charge of impiety, and exposed to the fulness of aggravated condemnation.

SECTION II.

THE STATE OF MIND, AND OF HEART, IN WHICH
THE ORDINANCE OUGHT TO BE OBSERVED.

1. *There should be a practical recognition of its nature and design.*

It must be evident, even to the most ordinary understanding, that while engaged in the actual observance of baptism, the thoughts and the

affections should really accord with the nature and design of the ordinance itself. Apart from this, indeed, it is utterly impossible that there can be any spirituality at all in the service. For most assuredly if its nature and design be not thus fully recognised, baptism is reduced at once to a mere idle, unmeaning, and, to say no worse, unprofitable ceremony.

In as much, then, as baptism is an exhibition of the justifying efficacy of Christ's blood, every parent while in the act of presenting his child to receive the outward rite, by which this exhibition is made, ought surely to cherish the spirit of believing dependance upon the grand sacrifice of the cross, as all-sufficient for the salvation of his child. Of course the condition of the infant, as by nature a child of corruption, should be not less seriously borne in mind, than the reality, as well as the justice of the condemnation, into which, along with our whole race, it has been brought, should be

prominently kept in view, and the absolute necessity, under which it is consequently lying, of being interested in the *free* salvation of the Gospel, should be humbly acquiesced in. In other words, there should be a distinct recognition both, on the one hand, of guilt as naturally belonging to and really characterizing the child, and also, on the other hand, of the Saviour's power to cancel that guilt.

In as much, likewise, as baptism points directly to the regenerating agency of the Holy Spirit, every parent, while using the appointed symbol of this agency, ought to keep before him its inestimable value, as the only means of eradicating from the soul of his child the evil with which it is naturally imbued, and of implanting in it, at the same time, the seeds of holiness, and thus fitting it for the service of God here, and for the enjoyment hereafter of celestial glory. While thus looking to the value of the Spirit's renewing influence, he

ought to cherish, at the same time, the fulness of earnest desire in reference to the child, for the experience of the operation of this influence, and for the manifestation also of its fruits. And as the gift of the Holy Spirit is expressly promised unto all who ask it in sincerity and in faith, he should be not less earnestly engaged in believing supplication for this precious gift on behalf of his offspring.

In as much, also, as baptism implies dedication to the service of God in Christ, every parent while presenting his child for this purpose, ought with his whole heart to resign it into the hand of the Lord—to place it entirely under the providential care, and at the sovereign disposal of his own heavenly Father. Regarding it as wholly and forever the property of him who gave it, he should acknowledge sincerely this its peculiar relation to God. Bearing in mind also, that it has been created in subserviency to the divine glory, he should cheerfully ac-

quiesce in his personal obligation to train it up for this all-important end. He should give way, at the same time, to the animating impression, that in being permitted thus to offer up his child as in covenant with God, he is enjoying an inestimable privilege not less than discharging an incumbent duty.

In as much, too, as baptism is not merely a sign but a seal of the covenant of grace—a visible pledge for the communication of its benefits, every parent, while in the act of putting this seal upon his offspring, ought surely to cast himself unreservedly on the willingness evidently implied in such a pledge as existing on the part of Christ, to bless his child with the fulness of the purchased redemption. The impossibility of obtaining any deliverance from the evils in which his children, not less than himself, are by nature involved, that does not spring entirely from this willingness of Christ to save, should be particularly looked to and

unequivocally acknowledged. Of course, the feeling of gratitude for the kindness of the Saviour, thus freely brought to bear upon the everlasting welfare of these objects of parental affection, should in all its fervour reign within him. And laying hold on the encouragement so naturally to be found in the contemplation of such unmerited love, he should with all humility, but still with believing confidence, appropriate to his infant, as well as to himself, the promise of the covenant, and thus rejoice in the Lord as his God, and the God of his seed.

2. Baptism should be an occasion of devotional retirement.

In manifest accordance with the practical recognition of its nature and design, just specified as essential to the spiritual observance of the ordinance, we have here to urge the propriety of devotional retirement in the season of baptism. The contrary practice prevails to a most

deplorable extent. Far from being embraced as an opportunity for serious reflection, humble communion with God, and consequent spiritual improvement, it seems in too many cases to be regarded merely as the pretext for laying almost completely aside the appearance of seriousness, whether in thought, in conversation, or in deportment. Friends and neighbours are brought together, not to assist each other in calling to mind the lessons of instruction and of admonition which the ordinance so affectingly suggests, with regard to the awfully important concerns of the soul, but to indulge in feasting, and mirth, and worldly conversation. Nay the sanctity of the Sabbath itself is seldom, in such cases, respected. Even when this happens to be the season of the solemnity, little difference if any at all, is made as to the custom referred to. Yet surely a moment's reflection is enough to impress upon the most careless, the sin and the danger here unquestionably involved.

As occurring on the Lord's day, such conduct admits of no possible defence. Even in ordinary circumstances, worldly indulgence on the Sabbath, being a direct violation of the command to "keep it holy," is peculiarly unbecoming in all who inhabit a Christian land, and *highly criminal* in all who make any the least profession of the Christian faith. What, then, must be its unseemliness and its criminality, as practised at a time when the acknowledgment of covenant-relation to God, and by consequence of especial obligation to honour and to serve him, is with such particular solemnity put forth. In such circumstances, indeed, the profanation of the Sabbath, of which we are speaking, may well give rise to the suspicion, that the Christianity of every one who can be charged with it, is no less really without substance than it is evidently without fruit.

But it is not merely when practised on the Lord's day, that in all this there is so much to

be condemned. At no time whatever can such conduct be in any measure consistent, with the nature of the service itself, or with the solemnity of the profession virtually implied in it, or rather directly expressed by it, on the part of the parent, and the awful responsibility of the situation in which it necessarily places him. Surely if there be a time when, more than another, worldly amusement or sensual pleasure is not merely out of place, but sinful in essence and pernicious in fruit, it is just the season of immediate approach unto God, in the character and as claiming the privileges of his chosen people. That heart can have little interest in this all-important solemnity which, almost in the very hour of observing it, can turn with relish to the gaiety or the jocularity of festive intercourse. What are we to think of that man's attachment to Christ, who, in the very season that has called him to the public declaration of it, seems to prefer the vanities or the

joys of the world, to the more sober, yet by no means the less delightful exercises of communion with the Father of his spirit? Or how can we ever imagine that any one is really impressed with the awful account, ere long to be demanded of him, as a parent in Israel, who yet hesitates not, on the very day that beholds another of their number publicly devoted to God, to place his household in circumstances the most unfavourable to all that concerns them as immortal and responsible beings? Were such conduct to be met with in the season of participating in the other sacrament, it could scarcely fail to be reprobated by all who make the slightest pretension to genuine Christianity as alike inconsistent and sinful. Upon what principle, then, can it be less inconsistent, or less sinful, in the season of participating in this? In no respect whatever is the ordinance of baptism of inferior sanctity to that of the supper. Equally, therefore, should they be made the

occasion of personal seriousness and family devotion.

SECTION III.

THE CONDUCT, PERSONAL AND RELATIVE, BY WHICH THE RECEPTION OF BAPTISM SHOULD BE FOLLOWED.

Here we have to remark in general, that subserviency to the glory of God and the cause of Christ ought to be the uniform distinguishing characteristic of the conduct referred to. To this, indeed, every professing parent is, by the very act of appearing with his child to observe the ordinance, necessarily brought under the direct and permanent obligation. In this grand principle, therefore, every thing that concerns him as an individual ought habitually to centre. Nor should he ever for a moment depart from its guidance, in reference whether to his do-

mestic arrangements, to his connexion with the Church of Christ, or to his intercourse with society at large. In short, there is no situation in which, as a professing parent, he can by any possibility be placed, where it should ever, even in the most distant degree, be lost sight of, either as to its paramount importance, or as to its salutary influence.

1. *More particularly, the professing parent, as having received the privilege of baptism for his children, is called to train up these in what has been emphatically termed by an Apostle, "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In other words, their RELIGIOUS education should be the chief object of solicitude and care concerning them.*

To this, indeed, all else that can possibly affect them, however valuable or desirable in any other respect, should be kept completely and uniformly subordinate. Very different,

alas ! is the course but too generally pursued. Worldly distinction seems to be all that, on the part of multitudes, is ever cared for in behalf of their offspring. To make them great in this world's honours is, with many, the all-engrossing desire. To make them rich in this world's possessions is, with many more, the only source of anxiety. By some, the embellishment of their persons, or the refinement of their manners, is looked to as the more prominent concern. By others, their possession of every fashionable accomplishment, however useless or unprofitable, is chiefly, if not exclusively, aimed at. Others again, seek but to enrich them with those treasures of human knowledge—those literary or scientific acquirements which may tend to exalt them in the eye of their fellow-men. In short, the things of time are, in most cases, sought after as alone of any consequence to their welfare. And while, in the pursuit of such objects, parental solicitude seldom operates in keeping

them away from the scenes of worldliness, of folly, or of dissipation, with which, in not a few cases, these are almost inseparably connected, their condition, as the subjects of God's moral government, is never so much as thought of, their prospects for eternity, as placed under the light, and amid the privileges of the Gospel, are never seriously attended to.

Nor is it among the openly profligate, or the declared votaries of infidelity alone, that all this is so woefully realized. In some degree or other, it is almost universally exemplified even among such as are, to a certain extent at least, distinguished by "the form of godliness." While it would be well, if even the most devoted Christian parent had no reason, in any instance, to reproach himself with such conduct towards his offspring, the charge of its utmost fulness may with perfect justice be brought home to not a few, who would rise up with unmingled

indignation, against the slightest suspicion of their genuine discipleship.

But, surely, it can need little penetration to perceive that the conduct referred to, is directly at variance, alike with sound reason and with Christian principle. No doubt, the advantages thus sought after are, many of them, really excellent in themselves, and all of them more or less valuable, in so far as the life that now is may be concerned. And were the period of human existence limited to the present transitory scene, though there would still be many a powerful reason for looking *first* to the glory of God, yet the peculiar importance thus attached to the things of time, might perhaps with some plausibility be excused. The case, however, is very materially, or rather entirely altered, when we look to the immortal destiny of man. Viewed in the light of eternity, the pursuits of the life that now is sink at once into utter insignificance. Nay, in as much as they very

naturally tend to draw the thoughts and affections of the soul away from its far better and far more enduring interests, they are no less dangerous in possession than they are ruinous in effect. Our progress here is but the course of preparation for a never-ending hereafter. And the day is rapidly drawing nigh, when, for all that at present belongs to us in our different spheres of personal usefulness, an account is to be demanded at the tribunal of Christ. O! then, what must be the situation *there* of the parent, who in spite of all his baptismal engagements, is now preferring for his children the service of Mammon, and thus standing between them and the required preparation for the coming immortality! How awful, when thus summoned with his offspring to the judgment seat, to hear himself openly denounced as instrumental in devoting them to the god of this world, and thus unfitting them for the presence of Jehovah, and the glory of heaven!

How awful, to behold them led away from the presence of the Judge, to that place of unutterable wo, for the horrors of which his own heedlessness of their spiritual and responsible nature has prepared them ! How inconceivably awful, thus to find himself lying (in the immediate presence of God,) under the charge of ruining, ay ! *murdering* their souls ! O ! if there be but one spark of parental affection now burning in the breast of any such, let him think of this, and instead of seeking to load his children with the treasures, to secure for them the honours, or to lead them to the attainments of this fleeting mortality, let him be stimulated to all possible and persevering exertion, for bringing them into full possession of the one thing needful—even that knowledge of God in Christ, which alone maketh “wise unto salvation,” and which alone therefore can be available to them when wealth has been snatched from their grasp by the cold hand of death, when fame

has passed for ever away with them into the land of forgetfulness, and all their much valued accomplishments are buried with them in the grave.

Let it not be thought, however, that in thus adverting to the course pursued by so many in training up their children, we would by any means inculcate the spirit of indifference to the temporal prosperity of these, or to their fitness for their worldly avocations and enjoyments, as intellectual or social beings. It is declared expressly by an Apostle, that “if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* Nor can the intellectual attainments, or the elegant accomplishments of the present life, any more than the provision for temporal subsistence to which this declaration so pointedly refers, be either rationally or

* 1st Tim. v. 8.

scripturally regarded as unlawful objects of desire, when kept in their proper place, and made subservient to their proper ends. So far therefore, as the pursuit of these can be thus regulated, or the possession of them thus characterized, to place them within reach of his offspring can never be considered at all inconsistent with baptismal engagement on the part of the parent. Nay, we hesitate not to affirm, that in as much as they may all, whether in a greater or in a less degree, be turned to account for the promotion both of individual progress, and of relative usefulness in the service of Christ, it would be not less sinful than unjust on his part, to withhold from his offspring, according to the ability or the substance with which God may have blessed him, any lawful means of obtaining and enjoying them. All, therefore, that we are anxious here to enforce, is just that every professing parent should so direct the education of his children, as to bring them, IN PREFERENCE

TO EVERY THING ELSE, under the full knowledge of their condition, *as belonging to God*, and especially under the practical influence of what more immediately concerns them in the present state of trial, *as the victims of sin* on the one hand, and *as the objects of redeeming love* on the other,—in other words, that he should make it the grand, the paramount object of desire and exertion, to impart unto them the truths which the Gospel unfolds, to implant within them the principles which the Gospel demands, to fill them with the hopes which the Gospel inspires, and that he should hold as utterly worthless, nay, most particularly avoid as really pernicious, all, however useful in regard to the present life, that does not in some shape or other, bear upon this high and holy end.

2. *In addition to the religious instruction of his children, the professing parent is, by the act of presenting these for Baptism, brought*

under the obligation, to set before them a
GODLY EXAMPLE.

Even apart altogether from the reception of this Christian privilege, no head of a family can ever, upon any principle either of duty or of affection towards his household, neglect thus to walk before them in all holy obedience. But surely, in coming forward to receive for his children a privilege such as this, to which they are entitled *only in virtue of their connexion with him in the capacity of a* TRUE BELIEVER, the parent is particularly bound to show, by corresponding practice, that he is really thus characterized.

The manifestation, too, in his personal deportment, of devotedness to the service of Christ, is of almost absolute necessity, to give effect to his exertions in training them up for the same moral and spiritual service. If they have any thing at all like reverence or affection for him, they can scarcely fail to make him the object of

habitual imitation. And being by nature under the ascendancy of our common corruption, it is just to be expected, that they will turn rather to the defects than to the excellencies that may appear in his general conversation and deportment. Nor is this by any means unfrequently realized. Instances are every where and every day to be met with, most strikingly illustrative of its truth. Surely, then, it ought to be, unto every one who has the immortal interests of his children really at heart, a matter of the most scrupulous attention, that in his whole character, as brought under the eye of his household, *Christian principle* should be more or less fully developed. Besides, how is it possible in the nature of things, that they can ever value that instruction, however seriously put forth by him, indifference to which, his own conduct at any time, or in any degree, discovers? Or, with what effect can they ever receive the admonitions, however pointedly or

skilfully directed by him, contrariety to which is at all displayed in his own practice? Assuredly, it is by no means beyond the ordinary comprehension, even of the youngest that is capable of receiving instruction at all, to conclude, that where the outward conduct of the parent is thus at variance with the doctrines which he inculcates, or the precepts which he enjoins, there can be little sincerity in his professed belief of the former, and as little reasonableness in his demand for submission to the latter. Can it be doubted, then, that the child will here find most ample encouragement to disregard what the parents may teach, or to neglect what they may require? Or, if compelled by parental authority professedly to value the one, or externally to obey the other, will he not very naturally rebel in his heart, against what, in this case, cannot but appear to be not less capricious and tyrannical than full of hypocrisy.

3. *The obligation to the exercise of Prayer is no less manifestly involved in the reception of Baptism.*

Not to mention that a devotionless believer is an evident contradiction in terms, and that consequently if communion with "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" be not habitually maintained by the professing parent, he must have every reason to conclude, that his observance of the ordinance before us can have been little better than mockery in itself, and can be followed by nothing else than the divine indignation as its fruit—not to mention this, it is never to be forgotten, that believing prayer is the channel through which, according to the express appointment of Jehovah himself, all the benefits of redemption, here so affectingly symbolized, are made to flow. If this divinely authorized method of seeking an interest in the Gospel salvation be wilfully disused, there can be no warrant whatever to hope, nay, in such

a case, it is the very height, not only of egregious folly, but of sinful presumption, to hope for any, even the smallest, of the blessings which that great salvation can be understood to embrace. Of course, therefore, there can be little sincerity in the profession, distinctly implied in baptism, of desire on the part of the parent that his child should participate in these benefits, and certainly as little consistency in his application of the sign and seal of such benefits to his child, if yet he cares not to supplicate, nor actually sets himself to supplicate, at the throne of grace, the full and effectual communication of them.

Here, then, the frequent, or rather the habitual use of this truly effective mean of grace, is, in reference to all who enjoy the privilege of dedicating their children by baptism unto God, at once commended by every principle of evangelical consistency, and enforced by every motive of parental affection. If in any degree

actuated by such principles and motives, every individual thus peculiarly privileged must find himself more or less powerfully constrained to embrace every suitable opportunity of drawing near to the great "Father of lights," not merely on his own behalf, to implore the mercy and the help that are needful for himself as a parent in Israel, but no less particularly on behalf of his offspring, to supplicate the out-pouring upon them of that divine influence, which alone, giving effect to religious instruction and holy example, can bring them so to know the truth as it is in Jesus, and to obey that truth in the love of it, as that, with enlightened understandings and renewed hearts, they may be enabled successfully to resist the peculiar temptations to which the season of youth is on every side exposed; to occupy with spiritual profit to themselves, and acknowledged usefulness to their Lord, the talents severally committed to them, and at length,

when called away from the scene of this earthly pilgrimage, to pass, in full meetness for its celestial glory, into the land of uprightness, of peace, and of rest.

But it is not only to frequent and fervent prayer *for* his children, that the professing parent is here so forcibly directed, as a duty resulting from the privilege of baptism. His obligation to pray *with* them, is no less obviously imperative. Not to insist particularly upon the many advantages arising from the habitual maintenance of family worship,—as, for example, the respect and affection thus inspired towards the parent himself among the different members of his household, the prevention or suppression of domestic discord thus generally effected, and, above all, the pious feeling thus almost necessarily diffused, and the evangelical deportment, thus very materially promoted,—not to insist upon these, it must be remembered, that to observe the ordinance is just, in the most

direct unequivocal manner, to declare our adherence to the resolution of Joshua, the leader of Israel, "as for me and for *my house*, we will serve the Lord." By obvious consequence, then, the very act of presenting his children for baptism, binds the professing parent to lead them, not merely as individuals, but also *in their social capacity*, to the worship of God in Christ. Unquestionably if he does not bring them *as a family* to the exercises of devotion, he breaks the baptismal vow, and being thus directly chargeable with the guilt of deliberately forswearing himself, the divine indignation cannot but be, in no ordinary degree, provoked against him. Nay, he must be held most awfully responsible, too, for not a little of the degeneracy, whether in principle or in practice, of which his children may prove the examples. No doubt, they must answer for themselves individually, while it is by no means impossible, that even the maintenance of family religion,

may, after all, be of little avail in regard to their spiritual improvement. But still, if the parent shall, in any case, wilfully neglect thus to put his offspring *in the way* of what may be, and, when rightly valued on their part, must be subservient to their preservation from sin, beyond all doubt, he is a partaker of their guilt, and renders himself liable to share their consequent everlasting doom.

A variety of excuses are brought forward in defence, or at least in extenuation, of this woefully prevalent neglect of family worship. We are told by some that they are TOO YOUNG. Others plead the WANT OF TIME. By many the WANT OF ABILITY is alleged. Not a few profess to be overcome by WANT OF CONFIDENCE. The utter futility, however, of all such objections as these, must be obvious, even upon the slightest reflection. The first, indeed, is so egregiously absurd, as scarcely to deserve any notice at all. How utterly ridiculous in any one who finds

himself old enough, to stand forth in the capacity, and to claim the privileges of a parent in Israel, yet to pronounce himself not old enough to undertake the peculiar duties of the situation he thus seeks to occupy.

Nor is there any thing more substantial in the plea, that there is a want of time. Alas! the individuals by whom it is urged, are too frequently those who have many hours to spare for the senseless parade, the foolish gaiety, the empty, nay, the sinful pleasures of a world that is lying in wickedness. But, in truth, the time required for the exercises of family devotion is too short to interfere materially, even with the most important of temporal affairs. And though it were to interrupt the course of secular pursuits, still, in as much as the present life is allotted to *prepare for eternity*, the duties of religion ought certainly to command our chief regard. It must not be overlooked, that the Saviour himself has expressly enjoined

his followers to “ seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;”* while he elsewhere most impressively reminds us, that nothing which this world can give, however delightful in pursuit, however excellent in possession, could, in any conceivable sense or degree, compensate for the loss of the soul.

Equally insufficient is the alleged want of ability. Even though it were strictly true, yet surely recourse might still be had to some of the many really excellent forms of prayer provided by the more gifted servants of God, to be statedly read, or repeated, in the hearing of a household. It is very seldom, however, that the alleged inability to pray, is so great as to justify this mode of discharging the duty. Where is there any head of a family so weak in capacity as to be unable intelligibly to ask forgiveness of his fellow-men, or to express to

* Matt. vi. 33.

them his various necessities, or to solicit their favour, their advice, or their aid? And what greater difficulty can there be in similarly addressing himself to God? Assuredly, if the professing parent has any thing like the realizing sense of the spiritual wants of his family, he can scarcely be at a loss for suitable words to acknowledge these, and to supplicate the spiritual blessings that are needed to supply them. In fact, were it not for the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, no such excuse would ever be seriously thought of. At all events, *the removal of the difficulty is best to be secured by* FREQUENT PRACTICE. In no instance, therefore, can the neglect of such practice be at all either wise or blameless.

The plea of diffidence is no less inadequate and inadmissible. Such diffidence may be very natural, and not a little overpowering; but it is by no means, on that account, free from sin. By perseverance in practically resisting its in-

fluence, it cannot but be, sooner or later, effectually overcome. Painful though it be, therefore, the *attempt* at least cannot be innocently neglected. But, indeed, this very want of confidence is itself, to no ordinary extent, fraught with guilt. It must proceed either from internal disrelish for the exercises of family devotion, or from being ashamed of strict adherence to the service of Christ. If it proceed from the former, then, beyond all doubt, the heart is still far from God. If it proceed from the latter, then is it most awfully met by the solemn denunciation of the Lord Jesus himself—"Who-soever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." *

CONCLUSION.

We cannot conclude this truly interesting and all-important subject better than by addressing the word of exhortation to young persons born of Christian parents, and brought up in the profession of the Christian faith.

Great, indeed, and manifold are the advantages which, as connected with such parents, you have been permitted to enjoy. Dedicated by them to the Lord in baptism, you have been not only cast upon the care of Him who is as wise to guide you as he is powerful to protect you, but set apart for his service more particularly as the objects of his redeeming love. Admitted into Christ's visible church, you have been placed within reach of the various means of

grace, so kindly provided and so powerfully calculated to fit you for the avocations and the duties that severally belong to you, in this all-endearing relation to God. Just in proportion, then, to the value of the privilege thus vouchsafed unto you, must be the aggravation of your guilt, if such a privilege be not now gratefully estimated, and assiduously improved. You know where it is said, that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”* Nor can you have forgotten the fearfully solemn denunciation of our Lord himself against the cities of Galilee, which had despised and abused their mercies—“Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at

* Luke xii. 48.

the judgment than for you.' * Such, then, being the awful responsibility that is lying upon you, as baptized persons, be persuaded to turn with all your heart, to what belongs to you, and lies before you, as thus particularly characterized.

We have seen that the ordinance, by the administration of which you have been brought into this peculiarly responsible situation, at once proclaims your state by nature, and exhibits the all-glorious method of deliverance from its evils. Thus reminded, then, of your inherent corruption, with all its consequent actual transgression, give way, immediately and practically, to the call for that "godly-sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Thus directed also to the blood of the cross, as shed for the expiation of guilt, and to the Spirit of grace, as sent forth to beat down the power and to remove the pollution of sin, let not that pre-

* Luke x. 13, 14.

cious blood be ever for one moment unheeded; let not that Holy Spirit be ever in any degree despised or resisted. Cast aside, at once and for ever, all else as but the refuge of lies, and cling in faith and in gratitude to Jesus as your hope, your help, your chosen portion, your only Lord. And seeing that this, your believing and grateful acceptance of Christ, as he is freely offered in the Gospel, if it be not a mere empty profession, must necessarily influence your external deportment, be careful at all times to manifest its sincerity by a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel. Let *the Sabbath* be duly sanctified—spent, not in idleness, or in amusement, but in the fear and the worship of God. Let *the Sanctuary* be habitually frequented—regarded, not as a place of gloomy devotion, or uncomfortable restraint, from which you are glad, upon every frivolous pretext or plausible excuse, to escape, but as the scene of much-valued spiritual improvement, as well

as of delightful communion with the Saviour and his people, to which, therefore, it is not less your privilege than your duty statedly to resort. Let *the Preaching of divine Truth* be listened to with seriousness and with self-application—with the endeavour fully to understand its doctrinal meaning and to perceive its influential bearing, and with the resolution, at the same time, to lay it up in your hearts and to practise it in your lives. Let *the Word of God* be considered your most sacred treasure, and followed as your surest guide—not only loved and valued above all earthly possessions, but daily perused, carefully studied, conscientiously obeyed. Let *the habit of Prayer* be assiduously cultivated and perseveringly maintained, at once as the medium of privileged communion with the Father of your spirits, and as the instrument of obtaining from him, both mercy to pardon and grace to help. More particularly, let the opportunity of *publicly acquiescing in*

your baptismal Dedication to God be speedily as well as humbly embraced. There can be little reality in your declared attachment to Christ, if you come not thus to acknowledge, *at his holy table*, in the face of the world, and under the eye of his people, your covenant-relation to God.—Say not that you are too young to take a step so important and so awfully responsible. Remember the gracious promise of your heavenly Father—“I love them that love me; and *those that seek me early shall find me.*” * Nor let it be forgotten, that your lives are as uncertain as they are short, and that consequently, the very first season of communion may be the last that is ever to come round to you.—Do not rest satisfied with the conviction that you are unprepared for this service. If you really are so, then frightful indeed is the prospect that lies before you! Unfitness here

* Prov. viii. 17.

necessarily implies that you are still “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.” So long, therefore, as any such disqualification remains, you must be without safety in life; you can have no hope in death; misery unspeakable awaits you in eternity. Surely, then, it is the part of wisdom, as well as of duty, instead of pleading a ground of exemption like this, rather to turn, without a moment’s delay, to the justifying righteousness of Christ, and having found an interest *there*, to show your believing and grateful reliance upon its sufficiency, by the appointed commemoration of that obedience unto the death of the cross, in which it was so gloriously wrought out.—Heed not the ridicule of the world, or the scorn of the ungodly. If these deter you from the public acknowledgment of Christ, then are you most assuredly preferring the opinion of the world to the glory of Jesus, and seeking “the praise of men, rather than the honour

which cometh from God only.’ While, therefore, you are foolishly, not to say wickedly, giving way to the enemies of your Saviour, and the despisers of your peace, unto you at the same time is the fearful threatening of our Lord, in all its fulness, addressed—“Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”*—Finally, let not the difficulties of the Christian service here stand in your way. These, it is true, are as formidable as they are manifold and multiplied. Painful, indeed, must it ever be to flesh and blood, faithfully to comply with the Saviour’s requisition, that we should “deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily, and follow him.”† And, doubtless, it can be no easy matter at any time, to obey the injunction, as expressly laid down to us, that we should “walk in wisdom toward them that are without,‡—letting our light so shine be-

* Matt. x. 33

† Luke ix. 23.

‡ Collos. iv. 5.

fore men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven."* But then, it is never to be forgotten, that the joys of the life of faith are, both in variety and in excellence, far more than enough to counterbalance all the hardness, which, as good soldiers of Jesus, you may be thus called to endure. Nor is it in your own strength that its trials are to be encountered. Christ himself has expressly promised, to protect his people from every danger that assails them, to bear them up triumphantly under every toil that oppresses them, to comfort them abundantly amid every sorrow that threatens to overwhelm them. Hesitate not, then, immediately to place yourselves under the banner of the cross. And go forth to the Christian warfare, animated by the well-grounded assurance, that you shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved you"†—that "the

* Matt. v. 16.

† Rom. viii. 37.

trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”*

* 1st Pet. i. 7.





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